DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 425 400 CG 028 970

AUTHOR Ashelman, Polly; Dorsey-Gaines, Catherine; Glover-Dorsey, Geraldine

TITLE Applications of Portfolio Assessment in a Teaching and Nursing Program.

PUB DATE 1997-07-00

NOTE 7p.; In: China-U.S. Conference on Education. Collected Papers. (Beijing, People's Republic of China, July 9-13, 1997); see CG 028 968.

PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Constructivism (Learning); Higher Education; *Nursing Education; *Portfolio Assessment; Undergraduate Students

ABSTRACT

Everyone who teaches deliberates about how to support students' constructivist processes and encounters the recurring question: "How can I maximize opportunities for learning and growth?" Portfolios provide a complex, multidimensional, and dynamic framework for assessment of professional development and support development of metacognitive strategies, student empowerment, and responsive program practice. Portfolio development is described as a cooperative process occurring throughout graduate training. It is related to professional training objectives for the programs discussed. Stakeholder, activities, and historical dimensions are described and related to various programs. The portfolios developed at these schools demonstrate that this type of assessment offers a flexible and personalized yet systematic means for assessing students' professional development and achievement of competence in requisite skills and concepts. In professions that emphasize interpersonal competence and acquisition of complex concepts, skills, attitudes and values, portfolios offer a valuable means for assessment. (Author/EMK)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 425 400

Chapter Two

Applications of Portfolio Assessment in a Teaching and Nursing Program

Polly Ashelman, Catherine Dorsey-Gaines & Geraldine Glover-Dorsey

Everyone who teaches deliberates about how to support students' constructivist processes and encounters the recurring question "How can I maximize opportunities for learning and growth?" In an effort to address this issue, several members of the Department of Early Childhood and Family Studies at Kean University in New Jersey designed a system of portfolio assessment, which has become an integral part of the evaluation process for graduate students. With a similar purpose, professors at the University of Texas School of Nursing at Galveston have formulated a portfolio plan for students in an undergraduate health assessment course.

Portfolios provide a complex, multidimensional, and dynamic framework for assessment. Development of metacognitive strategies, student empowerment, and responsive program practice are alsosupported through portfolio assessment (Paulson & Paulson, 1990; Rogers & Danielson, 1996). Maintaining portfolios for graduate students enrolled in the Department of Early Childhood and Family Studies at Kean University serves three primary departmental goals. First, assessment for college students is congruent with the department's position on appropriate practice for young children. Second, instruction and assessment are based on the principles of constructivism, which validate the importance of each student's role in self and shared reflection, goal setting, and personal responsibility for professional growth (DeVries & Kohlberg, 1990; Duff, Brown, & Scoy, 1995). Third, this type of assessment involves the faculty in a collegial process of reflection, critical analysis of program outcomes, and the preparation of their own portfolios.

An adaptation of The Cognitive Model for Assessing Portfolios (Paulson & Paulson,1990) has provided a comprehensive conceptual framework for constructing and evaluating portfolios for graduate students (Ashelman & Lenhoff, 1993). This model incorporates three dimensions; Activities, Historical and Stakeholder (See Table 1).

The Stakeholder Dimension involves the relationship of mutual investment shared between each student and faculty advisor. Student choice supports the concept of active involvement in assessment, as an essential and vital part of the construction of knowledge (Wadlington, 1995). In addition, as the student and advisor work together to select and analyze information, each invests time and energy that deepens the commitment of both to continued professional growth (Jones, 1993).

CG028970

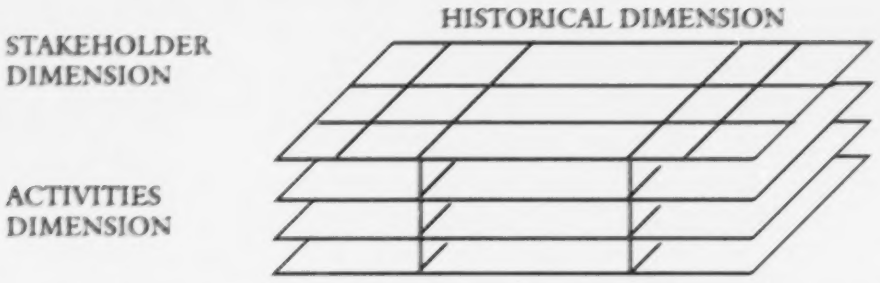
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
G. Wall
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 1. The Cognitive Model for Assessing Portfolios
Paulson & Paulson, 1990



The Historical Dimension divides the portfolio process into three phases, which include (a) a baseline record of performance, (b) documentation of changes over time, and (c) summative information that can be used to verify learning outcomes. The three phases of the Historical Dimension are divided between the time spent in introductory or core courses, specialized courses and electives, and the Advanced Seminar Research Project, whichis the culminating experience for students obtaining a master's degree.

The Activities Dimension defines what is to be collected in the portfolio, as well as what is minimally acceptable. Writing, professional development, and teaching practice are the three categories of the Activities Dimension. Multiple samples are collected for each category to strengthen the validity of judgments about performance.

Writing, the first category of the activities dimension, is a crucial area of development for graduate students. Through the portfolio process, students are encouraged to engage in critiques of their writing through individual and group activities. Process writing, which includes brainstorming, drafting, and editing, is emphasized (Hoskinsson & Thompkins,1994).

Students are encouraged to write frequently about a wide range of topics. Many of the samples are reviewed and reflected upon. In addition, specific samples of writing are collected at three specified intervals. The first takes place during two introductory courses in which a review of literature and a research proposal are developed. The second interval occurs during completion of additional required and/or approved elective courses. Students choose samples, which may include an action research project, a review of the literature, a position paper, and/or an essay test. The second phase culminates with a written comprehensive examination. The third interval includes the development of an Advanced Seminar Research Project, to be written for a professional audience. This project is developed in cooperation with a faculty mentor.

The second area of the Activities Dimension is professional development. This aspect of the Activities Dimension offers a systematic approach by which students are encouraged to reflect on their own behavior and how it corresponds to the standards of professional organizations, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Board for Professional

Teaching Standards (NAEYC, 1991; Duff, Brown, & Scoy, 1995). Leadership and commitment to developmentally appropriate practice have been identified as desired outcomes. Students' growth in these areas can be documented through participation in professional development activities.

The first two phases of assessing professional development include preparation of a professional growth plan and a written philosophy that connects theory and practice. The third phase iscompleted during a two semester Advanced Seminar Research Project. This project is shared with a professional audience through presentation of a workshop, submission of a grant, preparation of a manuscript for publication, or innovative leadership contribution to a professional organization.

The third category of the Activities Dimension is teaching practice. In specialized courses and informal study groups, graduate students simulate classroom practice through working with scenarios, problems, and dilemmas, which encourage them to interact collaboratively, to evaluate experiences and to debate both personal and professional issues. This simulated practice culminates with the comprehensive examination.

The comprehensive examination is written in essay format and requires students to formulate an action plan for a specific early childhood or family studies problem or topic, which demonstrates appropriate application of theory, research and personal insight. Each examination is read and responded to by three members of the Early Childhood and Family Studies Department. Thus, students receive feedback from multiple sources.

Field practice focuses on classroom behavior and change at the school level. Shared video analysis of the student as a practitioner, peer observation, and a documented statement about performance from the student's supervisor provide data about growth and development. Journals and narratives, as well as examples from children's projects, also yield some of the most important information about student's field practice.

Collecting and maintaining portfolio samples and artifacts is a cooperative process between the student and advisor. Students are responsible for maintaining their portfolio and for giving it a format that is personal and unique to them. Graduate students are also asked to provide feedback about the program at specified intervals. This is intended to inform the portfolio advisor and the graduate coordinators about student needs and reflections that are pertinent to the ways the department can be more supportive of their development. The most recent student-based change involves the addition of peer mentoring.

Mentoring is gaining recognition as a valuable process in early childhood staff development and teacher induction programs. In recognition that the roles and responsibilities of early childhoodprofessionals demand mastery of complex interpersonal skills, the mentoring relationship provides a context which fosters this type of growth. In addition, the support system mentoring creates enables individuals to take the risks that are necessary for major changes in personal and professional perspective and practice (Martin, 1997).

All graduate students in the Department of Early Childhood and Family

Studies are asked to participate in a peer mentoring program. Each student selects a mentor within the first semester of matriculation. Peer mentors are chosen from alumni of the master's program and other professional personnel who volunteer to serve in this capacity. Mentors and students meet or confer by telephone on a regular basis. All participants attend periodic general meetings, which encompass topics such a portfolio preparation. Mentors provide ongoing support as the students engage in the reflection and analysis required for portfolio development. Mentors also answer questions, assist in preparation for writing assignments and exams, engage in problem solving activities, share information about action research, and invite their group to their schools and to professional meetings.

The peer mentoring relationship is nonjudgmental, collaborative, and reciprocal. It focuses on personal and professional development of both the mentor and student. Mentors report that the rewards of continuing the connection to the Department of Early Childhood and Family Studies and to friends made during graduate studies, interaction and professional growth, the satisfaction of sharing their knowledge and expertise, and commitment to the field of early childhood as reasons for taking on their responsibilities. When asked to evaluate the program, students' responses ranged from gratitude for the help in surviving their first semester to appreciation for the personal and professional bond with their mentor that will last beyond graduate studies.

At the conclusion of the course of studies, all graduate students have an exit interview with their portfolio advisor and their peer mentor for the purpose of examining their growth and reflecting on the context for learning provided by the department. Analysis of portfolio data serves to help with evaluation of how well the teacher education program is meeting its goals and it also provides feedback about the impact of portfolio participation on students' classroom practices with children.

An examination of outcomes for alumni of the graduate program,who participated in portfolio assessment, indicated that most were implementing some type of portfolio assessment with children, families, or both (Gracon & Ashelman, 1995). Seven of these students have shared their work on portfolio assessment through presentations at conferences and professional workshops (Ashelman, 1996). Thus, they have also become better models of appropriate assessment practices for other practitioners to emulate.

In the undergraduate Health Assessment course offered at the University of Texas School of Nursing at Galveston, students are introduced to the theoretical base for physical, psychological, sociological, and cultural assessment of clients throughout the life span. They have the opportunity to practice the procedural steps necessary for specific assessments in a supervised laboratory setting. A major course objective addresses the critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills that are necessary to analyze and report on health histories and physical assessment findings. The use of portfolios has provided a way to assess students' progress in these areas. The portfolio activities emphasize students' responses to questions regarding specific body systems, such as the eye or the ear. Criteria for evaluation has been developed and shared among

the nursing professors to insure consistency in the evaluation process. Professors and students confer to share feedback at various intervals during the semester. Information gathered on the use of portfolios in the Health Assessment course has been positive. Since effective communication is essential in the nursing profession, it is imperative that the students are able to critically assess the clinical situation and report their findings accurately. The use of portfolios appears to be an effective means for documenting these aspects of professional growth.

The examples of portfolios developed at Kean University and the University of Texas School of Nursing at Galveston demonstrate that this type of assessment offers a flexible and personalized, yet systematic, means for assessing students' professional development and achievement of competence in requisite skills and concepts. Portfolios also enable teachers and students to collaborate in the assessment/learning process in a manner that supports all participants. In professions that emphasize interpersonal competence and acquisition of complex concepts, skills, attitudes and values, portfolios offer a valuable means for assessment.

References

Ashelman, P. (1996). Portfolio assessment: An early childhood and family studies model. In Eeva Hujala (Ed.) *Childhood Education: International Perspectives.* Oulu, Finland: Finland Association for Childhood Education International.

Ashelman, P. & Lenhoff, R. (1993). Portfolios in early dholdhood education. In Michael Knight and Denise Gallaro (Eds.) *Portfolio Assessment: Applications of Portfolio Analysis.* NY: University Press of America.

DeVries, R. &, Kohlberg, L. (1990). Constructivist early education: Overview and comparisons with other programs.Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Duff, R.E., Brown, Mac. H. & Scoy, I.J. (1995, May). Reflection and self-evaluation: Keys to professional development. *Young Children, 50,* 81-87.

Gracon, M. & Ashelman, P. (1995) Shared portfolio assessment: Supporting writing development through home-school collaboration. *Early Childhood Education, 28,* (2), 53-57.

Hoskinsson, K. & Thompkins, G. (1994). *Language arts: Content and teaching strategies.* New York: Merrill.

Jones, E. (1993). Introduction: Growing teachers. In E. Jones (Ed.)*Growing teachers: Partnerships in staff development.*Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Knowles, M (1980). *The modern practice of adult education.* New York :Cambridge University Press.

Martin, A. (1997). *Transformative dimensions of mentoring:A study of early childhood teachers perceptions.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Teachers College, Columbia University.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1991). Position statement on guidelines for appropriate curriculum content and assessment of children ages 3 through 8. *Young Children, 46,* 21-37.

Paulson, L. & Paulson, P. (1990). How do portfolios measure up? A cognitive model for assessing portfolios. Union, WA: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northwest Evaluation Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service, No. ED 334251).

Rogers, S. & Danielson, K. (1996). *Teacher portfolios: Literacy artifacts and themes.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Wadlington, E. (1995, May).Basing early childhood teacher education on adult education principles. *Young Children, 50,* 76-80.